



## Geneva NGO FORUM - Beijing+20 **UN ECE Regional Review**

3-5 November, 2014 - Geneva, Switzerland

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### **Concept Note**

#### **Background & Purpose**

There are dates which mark history - the 4<sup>th</sup> World Conference on Women (4WCW), convened in Beijing in 1995, is one of them. On this historical occasion, UN Member States adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA), and through this milestone text for the advancement of women in the twenty-first century, committed to a decisive agenda for women's empowerment.

Subsequently, reviews and appraisal of progress made by Member States in the implementation of these commitments have been conducted every 5 years, each time identifying setbacks and new challenges, and providing recommendations on the way forward. In 2013, Member States adopted a resolution calling for a 20-year review of the BPfA to take place in 2015 for the 4WCW twentieth anniversary during the 59<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women, under the leadership of UN Women. As part of the process, the five UN Regional Commissions are to conduct regional reviews in 2014 to feed the global review.

In collaboration with the UN ECE\*, the non-governmental organizations (NGO) representatives to the United Nations, based in Geneva and assembled under the NGO Committee on the Status of Women, Geneva (NGO CSW Geneva) will take part in this important review process by organizing an NGO that will bring together the voices of civil society representatives from the 56 countries of the diverse ECE region and contribute critical input to the ECE regional review meeting.

The NGO Forum will take place on 3-5 November 2014, prior to the UN ECE regional meeting of 6-7 November, at the Palais des Nations, in Geneva.

#### **Objectives**

- 1. To contribute to the Beijing +20 review process, both at the ECE regional level and globally, by providing vital perspectives, information and recommendations from a large base of NGOs and women's rights advocates who are active in Europe, North America and Central Asia. To this effect, the NGO Forum will examine selected issues from the 12 critical areas of the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action to
  - review progress made, remaining gaps and existing challenges
  - seek government accountability for their commitments made to women's human rights, equality and empowerment initiatives.

UN ECE - The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, is comprised of 56 countries: Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uzbekistan (www.unece.org)

<sup>\*\* 1)</sup> Women and Poverty; 2) Education and Training of Women; 3) Women and Health; 4) Violence against Women; 5) Women and Armed Conflict; 6) Women and the Economy; 7) Women in Power and Decision-making; 8)Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women; 9) Human Rights of Women; 10) Women and the Media; 11) Women and the Environment; 12) The Girl-child.



- 2. **To identify emerging women's issues** brought on by globalization, the fast development of Internet and other new technologies, climate change & all of its consequences, migration and demographic changes, rising trafficking and violence against women, and more generally, the multiple crises affecting our increasingly interconnected world.
- 3. To provide input for the current discussions on the Post-2015 Agenda, on how a stand-alone goal on gender equality could be crafted and how women's issues could be best streamlined in all of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are expected to succeed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2015.

Additionally, the NGO Forum aims to create a space for open dialogue among NGOs, civil society and other stakeholders from the 56 ECE member countries on the realities impacting women in this very diverse region. The Forum will facilitate a candid exchange of views and information, the open voicing of concerns, establishment of common positions, sharing of best practices, and more.

#### **Expected Outcome**

The NGO Forum's expected outcome is a comprehensive report with a set of action-oriented recommendations that

- will be presented through oral interventions at the governmental Beijing+20 UN ECE Regional Review Meeting, taking place immediately after the NGO Forum, and
- will be included in the final ECE report.

The report will outline the issues, discussions and conclusions of the Forum; recommendations will focus on shortcomings of the implementation of the BPfA, current challenges and emerging issues facing women in the ECE region, as well as, government accountability for commitments made to women's rights, equality and empowerment initiatives.

#### **Program & Participants**

The NGO Forum will convene over three days, from 3 - 5 November 2014 (Mon. – Wed.) and take place at the Palais des Nations, in Geneva.

- **Day 1:** afternoon opening ceremony and plenary review of major achievements and challenges for gender equality in the ECE region
- Day 2: breakout sessions on critical substantive issues, including emerging issues with a sub-regional perspective
- Day 3: continued meetings on substantive issues, conclusions and recommendations; closing ceremony at the Palais des Nations.

The envisioned format will include the presentation of issues via topical short films, followed by panel discussions, leading to conclusions and recommendations.

**Participants** will include national & international women's rights advocates, UN agencies, academic institutions, media and private sector actors from the 56 countries of the UN ECE region and other countries. Adequate geographical coverage and thematic expertise will be ensured.

#### **Organizing Committee & Partners**

Established at the dawn of the first World Conference on Women, the NGO Committee on the Status of Women, Geneva brings together UN representatives of more than 40 international NGOs in consultative relationship with the United Nations, working together to advocate for women's rights, women's empowerment and gender equality. Several of its current members were in Beijing 20 years ago.

The NGO CSW Geneva has a long history working on women's rights: it was an active participant of all 4 World Conferences on Women, and a key contributor to the 1995 Beijing conference and its outcome document, the Beijing Declaration. The NGO CSW Geneva has also subsequently organized, in close collaboration with the UN ECE, NGO Forums



for the UN ECE regional reviews of Beijing+5, Beijing+10 & Beijing+15.

Under the leadership of its Bureau, the Committee has set up a "Beijing+20 Task Force" led by 4 co-chairs, with working groups on substantive issues, logistics, communications & outreach, and finance & fundraising. The Task Force will work in close collaboration with the UN ECE in the planning of the NGO Forum, will invite UN Women to play a key role, and welcome the participation of sister NGO CSW committees in New York and Vienna.

#### **Budget & Sponsors**

A budget has been estimated that will cover the costs of the venue, program, speakers, publicity, communications, organization, secretariat, interpretation and translation, as well as, sponsorship of selected participants.

The NGO CSW Geneva will invite select partners and sponsors among UN entities, country missions, "gender certified' corporations and other institutions to take part in this milestone event.

#### **Geneva International**

Home to a multitude of international organizations, including approximately 30 UN entities and specialized agencies, 172 permanent country missions, more than 250 international NGOs, foundations, academic and research institutions, plus many private sector actors and generous citizens of good will, Geneva is emerging as a key center for the promotion of human rights, development and peace, the development of international norms, and the resolution of global issues.

The Geneva NGO Forum will be a high-level event, on par with this Geneva International cluster of excellence. The NGO CSW Geneva will thus, seek collaboration with the Office of the Presidency of Geneva International and the authorities of Geneva.

## Let's work together to act | advance | achieve | women's rights!



NGO CSW Geneva members meeting with UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka on 15 January 2014



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#### Geneva NGO FORUM - Beijing+20 NGO Forum Beijing+20 Review - Organizing Committee

Chair + Communications & PR: **ZONTA International /** Simone Ovart

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Vice-President: Make Mothers Matter International (MMM) / Valerie Bichelmeier Treasurer: The Salvation Army / Sylvette Huguenin

Les Amis du Comité ONG de la Condition de la Femme, GE NGO Committee on the Status of Women, Geneva

Geneva Secretary: Soka Gakkai International (SGI) / Hayley Ramsay-Jones

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